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ABSTRACT

This paper critically examines the rhetoric of the effective schools and school-based management (SBM) models for educational reform as they relate to an ongoing schoolwide demonstration project to enhance children's motivation and learning. The demonstration project, also called "the coalition," was adopted at one elementary and one middle school in a southeastern Michigan school district. Based on goal theory, the coalition aimed to change school policies and practices to shift the student focus to one of task mastery and learning rather than performance and relative ability. One conclusion is that without a guiding theory of student learning, a discrepancy between a school's institutionalized expectations and its stated mission is difficult to detect. Second, as a single strategy for improvement, the concept of teacher empowerment provides limited scope for substantive change. Finally, a collegial staff is desirable but not sufficient for meaningful school reform. An implication is that what we know about children's goals for learning provides a more useful starting point for reform. (Contains 33 references.) (LMI)

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Restructuring schools: some aspects of site-based management and effective schools thrusts

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Introduction

The current clamor for school reform in America is reaching unprecedented heights; educators, policy makers, politicians, and special interest groups are vying for attention as they pursue reform from numerous different perspectives. Two broad themes have dominated recent plans to restructure schools: the assertions arising out of the effective schools literature and the decentralizing ideas embodied in site-based management. Also beginning to gain a large audience, however, are those who point to the complexity of the problems involved in attempting to change schools in any meaningful or sustained fashion (Cuban, 1990, 1992; McCaslin & Good, 1992; Wehlage, Smith, & Lipman, 1992). In this paper I critically examine the rhetoric of the effective schools and site-based management models as they relate to an ongoing school-wide demonstration project to enhance children's motivation and learning. This project offers an alternative view of the imperatives of restructuring and underscores some important limitations of these popular models for school improvement. While the nature of the project's approach is principally derived neither from effective schools research nor from the site-based management movement, the experience has revealed much that is directly related to both of them.

Any attempt to fundamentally alter student experiences implies very significant changes in schooling. A key premise of the approach to school change described below reflects just such a belief: restructuring needs to be comprehensive and profound if there is to be any lasting impact on schools. From this perspective, what a school chooses to stress is indicative of what it values as the purposes of learning and also who is to be valued. This association between intentions and behavior is consistent with recent formulations of goal theory (e.g., Pervin, 1991; Ford & Nicholls, 1991). Efforts to restructure schools from either site-based management or effective schools perspectives tend not to stress these components of systemic change. The following section outlines the project's rationale and some of the changes proposed or implemented after two years of a three year intervention.

Enhancing student motivation: A school-wide theoretical approach

This demonstration project (referred to as the "coalition") is a comprehensive, long term effort to enhance children's motivation and learning (Maehr & Midgley, 1991). The theoretical framework has been adopted at two demonstration elementary and middle school levels in the same southeastern Michigan urban school district. The premise of this program is that school leaders impact the investment, motivation, and learning of children by influencing the nature of the school climate. Researchers and school leaders examine school goals, policies and practices that help shape the ways in which children think about learning. The undertaking, broadly, is to develop and implement strategies to create a school environment where children are focused on understanding and approaching tasks for intrinsic reasons rather than being concerned with relative ability and relative performance. A control/experimental school design enables us to make comparisons between underachieving students in target schools and underachieving students in similarly sized comparison schools. Data have already been gathered on measures of students, teachers, and parents. Completing our data set is a sample drawn from all elementary schools in the district of fifth grade children bound for the two middle schools.

The university contribution to the coalition is not linked to prescriptions but formulated on the basis of recent theories of motivation, and more specifically, goal theory. Of concern from this perspective is the individual's construction of meaning or purpose for achievement striving and the implications that these purposes have for academic interest and growth. An expanding body of research links the adoption of such goal orientations to the school environment (Maehr, 1990; Midgley & Maehr, 1991); the classroom (e.g., Ames & Archer, 1988); self-regulated learning (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990); study strategy use (Nolen, 1988); and cognitive engagement (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988). Two sets of contrasting goals have been operationalized in studies of this kind. They include:

mastery versus performance focused (Ames & Ames, 1984); learning versus performance (Elliott & Dweck, 1988); and task-involved versus ego-involved (Nicholls, Patashnick, & Nolen, 1985). These labels denote essentially identical constructs but share an association between the goal stresses of the environment and dimensions of student motivation and achievement. As students perceive classrooms to be structured under performance or mastery regimes, they adopt different learning goals and demonstrate qualitatively different motivation. The demonstration project extends this goal-directed approach to the context of the whole school environment.

In practice, the development of priorities and the choice of procedures and policies examined have largely arisen out of current concerns of school leaders. Perhaps the most conspicuous change to date made at the elementary school ('East'; not its actual name) is the adoption of multi-age classrooms. This model, known as MAGIC (Multi-Age Grouped and Individualized Classrooms), grew out of a deep-seated concern about the negative effects on students resulting from grade retention. Three classrooms incorporate first, second and third graders and a different team of teachers is responsible for three classes of third, fourth, and fifth graders. The model now works as an experimental unit alongside more traditional age-graded classrooms. To facilitate a multi-age structure, team teaching strategies and interdisciplinary concepts are continually being developed.

In addition to the MAGIC program, the elementary level coalition is looking at a number of different aspects of the school in light of the coalition's aims. These include curricular issues such as innovative approaches to the teaching of science and mathematics. Additionally, small groups have been formed to examine important school-wide topics such as assessment, recognition, and parent and community involvement. The core group of staff participants at coalition meetings has grown considerably since inception. Among the changes already made at East is the removal of the honor roll from public display, a change in procedure at the annual science fair (such that all students can now contribute rather than just those who produce the 'best' work), and the development of a list of principles of recognition which now act as a policy guide for any new suggestions that arise.

A flattering article appeared in the local press last winter confirming the considerable positive impact this program has had on the school and community. While not every teacher has enthusiastically endorsed the project and more active parental support is being sought, we believe the school is beginning to take on a different psychological climate. The school board has described the program in glowing terms and last Fall appropriated special financial support solely for MAGIC teachers' expenses. And recently, a group of parents whose children are in multi-age classrooms have begun to organize and express to the local middle school their concern that the benefits of multi-age organization should be preserved when their children move schools.

Members of the middle school coalition would echo the concerns of these parents. When we first encountered our target middle school ('West'; not its actual name) we were struck by how much it resembled a high school or a "traditional" junior high school in its organization and mores. The status change from junior high to middle had been made just a few years before our introduction to the school. Although the sixth grade has operated as somewhat distinct from the seventh and eighth grades, school-wide this has never been considered an institution with a middle school philosophy. A veteran teacher suggested that "Taking away the ninth grade has not made us a middle school. We are still a junior high."

As with East elementary school, the task has been to examine school policies and practices with a view to moving away from an emphasis on relative ability and toward a focus on learning. The issues addressed so far include: team teaching, student grouping, curriculum enhancement, small house, interdisciplinary units, evaluation, and an advisory program. In connection with such topics the coalition has helped organize special teacher workshops, visits to other middle schools, a school retreat, and smaller working committees. This is apart from our regular weekly coalition meetings and attendance at meetings of the local school board and the Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO).

In the sixth grade teachers have formed teams of three or four or in two cases, have organized predominantly self-contained classes. The seventh grade is busy forming into teams also. From the coalition's point of view, and this is something that we continually stress, particular organizational structures are not nearly as important as the overall experience of classroom and school culture. This is why we prefer to use the term 'enabling mechanisms' to describe strategies that have evolved; they are considered a means towards our ends rather than restructuring imperatives. For example, during the past year some teachers have participated in cooperative learning group workshops. These inservice activities are supported by the coalition but not uncritically since it is quite possible for cooperative learning strategies to be implemented in ways that still force children to be ego-involved and ability focused. In this case the role of the coalition is to ask important questions about the form that cooperative learning will take, including the nature of the tasks presented and the method of evaluation employed. There are some school 'innovations', as will be discussed, that are contrary to the framework and that do not attract any support from us.

Although massive restructuring has not yet made the agenda at West, there are encouraging signs that teachers view the coalition as a relevant forum for discussing new approaches to their task. The coalition has enabled staff to discuss, for example, their experiences on various inservices such as one held on mixed ability mathematics and another on portfolio assessment. Other teachers have brought to the group their ideas on how to grade for effort or how to integrate existing subjects in interesting yet feasible ways. Also brought to the attention of the coalition has been a concern about the efficacy of the program for 'gifted and talented' students. This has prompted questions about why, for example, library research skills are considered integral only to this program and not to courses for other children; the (very inclusive) criteria for admission to the program; and, a teacher's claim that "all these (sixth grade) students get is the seventh grade book a year early". The coalition is now working on bringing teachers' disparate experiences and concerns together in a more deliberate and useful manner so that more teachers can systematically benefit from new approaches and the inservices that others have attended.

The restructuring efforts of the coalition, then, are guided by goal theory. The coalition teams are committed to the creation of a whole school environment where the stress is on student task mastery and the valuing of learning activities for intrinsic reasons. The preceding overview of the operations of the coalition provides the theoretical and empirical background for the analysis that follows.

Effective schools reform

The effective schools literature (e.g., Edmonds, 1979; Elmore, 1990; Rutter, Naught, Mortimore, Ouston, & Smith, 1979; Good & Weinstein, 1986 and Purkey & Smith, 1983, for reviews) is founded on a belief that a school's ethos or psychological environment is related to student outcomes. More effective schools, as indicated by indices of standardized tests, tend to share certain characteristics of the way in which they function.

The ideas of the effective schools movement have apparently had an impact in this school district; related issues regularly arise in discussions with school board officials and several schools post lists of well documented correlates of effective schools. At West middle the list includes: safe and orderly environment; climate of high expectation for success; instructional leadership; clear and focused mission; opportunity to learn and student time on task; frequent monitoring of student progress; and, home-school relations. Teachers have reported, however, that the extensive literature provided and training received in effective schools concepts have not been directly useful to them in guiding policy. Some questions immediately spring to mind. Does "more frequent monitoring" mean more testing on dates and facts? Is a clear and focused mission more important than the nature of the mission? Whatever schools stand for, where they are headed, and how school policies and practices can be changed to move them in that direction seem to be the neglected questions of effective schools research.

One of the consequences of the awareness of correlates of effectiveness is that in trying to match school climate with them, the administration must seek to add to the school's inventory. Thus there is an understandable emphasis on acquiring more of whatever item is indicated as important. This translates into pleas for more time for core subjects, electives, computer studies, school band, and study skills classes. Similarly, increases in the number of prizes and awards, marking periods, and teacher inservice courses are all deemed high priority. What we are witnessing calls forth the warning made by Good & Weinstein (1986), that "too many advocates of change based on the school effectiveness literature assume linear relationships - if a little is good, more is certain to be better" (p.1094).

From the perspective of the coalition, more of everything is certainly not an answer. Neither did University coalition team members enter into the process equipped with lists of objectives and a timetable for implementation. This was precisely the type of "intervention" that we felt would undermine the theme of collaboration. In addition, we recognized Cuban's (1990) observation regarding the recyclable nature of many previous attempts at educational reform and therefore wished to avoid any charge that the university was seeking to impose its agenda or the latest educational fad. Not only do ready-made strategies tend to nullify the contribution of teachers, they ignore a school's climate and history. However, we did bring some clear ideas on what a school culture might look like if the goal stresses of the school were focused on children's engagement and valuing of school tasks. This guiding principle of reform, unlike recommendations from the effective schools thrust, puts the student at the heart of restructuring decisions.

Our collaborative intentions, especially during the first year, have not been communicated as successfully as we had hoped. Reports filtered through from teacher coalition members in both schools that some colleagues not directly involved with the coalition did not want to acquiesce with "what the university is telling us to do". A lingering suspicion that the university has a hidden agenda has also come to our attention. As one teacher at West claimed: "What you really want us to do is to get rid of tracking altogether, isn't it"? This, despite strenuous efforts to communicate with all staff, receive feedback on proposed changes and generally enlist the support of all teachers.

As a corollary of the effective schools movement, schools are increasingly expected to prepare a written statement of their purpose. In both demonstration sites a state-mandated school improvement team, convened and working before the collaboration began, had the task of producing a mission statement for the school. The outcomes, after considerable effort and several months of work, were remarkably similar in tone and content. While clearly it is difficult for any institution to produce a statement that does not sound derivative or word magical, in both cases there appeared to be a sense of accomplishment and shared vision among the architects of the statements. A teacher from East elementary commented that "every word took hours".

At East the mission statement affirms the conviction that all students can learn, "regardless of previous academic performance, family background, race, or gender". West's mission statement extols the virtues of a "challenging environment" for students' "future as responsible citizens". Such statements are unlikely to cause much controversy; any goal could be said to be consonant with such statements. Yet a close examination of school policies could lead one to argue that students are the recipients of a sometimes contrary form of expectancy information. First, there is an abundant use of ability markers, particularly at West Middle. In addition to the ubiquitous practice of designating students as 'A', 'B', 'C', etc., there is a strong predilection toward referring to children by their school-designated partitions: 'special', 'basic', 'general', 'advanced', or 'gifted and talented'. In discussions with teachers at West, these labels have taken on the status of natural, enduring categories and are by far the most frequent means by which teachers identify learners. This situation could be contrasted with, for example, a school employing an advisory program where a student might commonly be identified as 'belonging' to her advisory teacher or where a student's membership of an interest group or cooperative

learning group is the primary means of reference. The point being that there are alternative ways in which teachers could refer to students and prevent the reinforcement of the school's focus on relative ability.

When interviewed, many of the teachers make it clear that they are aware of possible self-fulfilling dangers in maintaining low expectations for students. The lesson from school effectiveness literature on the need for schools to hold high expectations has been heeded at a teacher-pupil interactional level. At the same time any contribution that the school's organizational structure, tracking practices, or lock-step curricular plan makes toward limiting definitions of student aspirations is largely ignored. This observation is all the more interesting since such policies are clearly manipulative areas for teachers. What appears to be absent are school-wide or system level strategies for communicating high expectations to students.

Collegiality and school effectiveness

Purkey and Smith's (1983) extensive review of effective schools studies argued that the process variable of collaborative planning and collegial relationships should be considered a significant ingredient in school effectiveness. The coalition began by assuming that collegiality among school staff would indeed be essential if our aims for improving schools were to be realized. However, over the past two years experience suggests that this most desirable element does not carry overwhelming significance.

The complaint heard from teachers at East in the initial stages of this project was that the coalition was greatly disturbing to their sense of harmony and direction. The school is held in high regard by the local community and teachers pointed to their intake of a large percentage of "difficult" pupils as evidence of the school's efficacy. Staff were anxious to dispel any idea that the school was not functioning in a dynamic and collegial way.

Now that processes of change have begun, e.g., multi-age classrooms, changes in recognition structures, etc., staff harmony is diminished and there are also signs of some parental unease. The disappearance of the honor roll has certainly been viewed with alarm by a number of school staff and parents. Yet changes are being made and converts won. Had each proposal required consensus and collegial relations as precursors for action it is doubtful that any significant change would have passed beyond the discussion stage. Ironically positive change (at least in our terms) has come about only through a process of challenging assumptions and creating discord.

At West there are mixed indicators of the extent to which staff operate collegially. While, for example, sixth grade teachers share a single hall in the building and consider themselves as basically non-departmental, prior to the coalition there was virtually no shared academic planning time. When the whole of the sixth grade staff met for a half day to plan interdisciplinary units a coalition member informed us this was the first time in the history of the school that any such systematic planning had occurred. Since then, however, we have noted that though teachers share common planning time during the day, there has been a return to independent planning and negligible collaboration, as had previously been the case.

The seventh and eighth grades are more departmental-bound and teachers tend to view themselves as subject specialists. Although teachers certainly collaborate, there is no school organizational pattern to encourage staff to work closely together. Forming small teams in these grades has been problematic and complicated by a view of the existing schedule as sacrosanct. Also, one department's insistence on preserving between class ability grouping has determined that other teachers' plans for team teaching of heterogeneous groups are largely inoperable.

The thrust of our efforts is not directed at getting staff to work together simply because that would be a good thing. Rather, our approach is to indicate to the teachers that collaborative planning should enable staff to develop more efficiently a consistent task-focused environment for their students. As Fullan et al (1990) point out, "collegiality must

be linked to norms of continuous improvement and experimentation in which teachers are constantly seeking and assessing potentially better practices.." (p.14).

Site-based management and teacher empowerment

The "school-based management" or "site-based management" (SBM) thrust has been touted as a strategic response to the problem of making schools operationally more relevant to their clients (Marburger, 1983, 1985). In large-scale reform efforts such as the Chicago schools restructuring plan, school-based management has been a central strategy (Hess, 1991). Proponents of SBM believe that the closer a decision is made to the students served, the better that decision will serve students' needs. Moreover, those involved with and empowered to make decisions will have a greater commitment to the enterprise.

In common with advocates of this form of power structure, the coalition supports the argument that employees will be more productive when they participate in the decisions that affect their lives. This is wholly consistent with a motivational approach stressing a sense of personal agency. However, our experience on the coalition teams has demonstrated that site-based decision making is not as compelling an issue for teachers as might be assumed, especially in view of the constraints that staff perceive in connection with their numerous professional obligations.

Attempts to devolve power to schools have not been demonstrably successful at keeping teachers close to significant pedagogical decisions (Johnson, 1990). In both our target schools we have observed the large amount of administrative work that inevitably accompanies SBM. For the most part, however, the increased responsibilities are focused on resource allocation of a kind barely related to teaching and learning issues. Given that many teachers are in a state of continual exhaustion, it is not surprising to find some who interpret their site-based duties as extra work rather than as an opportunity for professional development.

Teachers from both schools have seriously suggested that they have no time to think. Our weekly coalition meetings have been regarded as welcome but highly unusual opportunities for staff interaction.

> ..with the present organizational patterns and expectations, there is little, if any, opportunity for teachers to reflect significantly on practice; little, if any, encouragement or support for teachers to be the "students of teaching" Dewey suggested they had to be to remain vital in any professional sense (2 or three hours per day for planning). (Perrone, 1985, p.656).

Presently schools are in a sense too busy to run themselves. Finding time for reflection borders on the utopian for institutions already paralyzed by minutia. But as Clark (1992) contends, the value of reflecting on action in order to better inform the process of change, is crucial. In would appear that in order for the SBM process to work schools must be given leeway to develop a critically reflective posture. This will entail moving beyond conceptions of teachers as units of efficiency, devoted to maximizing time on task for the maximum the number of students taught per day.

Though conditions are far from ideal, for most purposes schools in this district are permitted to operate under a SBM system and are encouraged by the superintendent to institute innovative practices. What is missing from the dynamics of this structure is a movement toward any particular educational vision or a confrontation with the issues of "content and linkage" (Newmann, 1993). Working with no theoretical guidelines, the school improvement team at West has endeavored to make judicious decisions on budget allocation. Shortly preceding our involvement at West, an attempt was made by the school improvement team to gather information on students' most pressing concerns for school improvement. The vice-principal had the task of organizing scores of ideas thematically. As might be expected, the result was not very helpful. The basis for decisions on the viability of these wide ranging suggestions fell into such perfunctory categories as cost,

scheduling hurdles, or acceptability to the staff. Many of the ideas, such as more computer time, increased provision for counseling, and more electives, have little chance for adoption not because administrators do not see a need for them, but simply because each idea represents just another add-on. The futility of the exercise was underlined by the absence of any process of theoretical integration; there was no system with which to evaluate the utility of any single proposal.

We have had frequent cause to consider the form that aspects of site management can take. One such instance occurred with the district purchase of textbooks. In sympathy with the principles of SBM we had felt confident that teachers would express a desire to have control over the selection of texts for their classes. However, in this case we learned that a school board official had made an inexpensive bulk purchase of books from a publisher and that both middle schools were to use them. Expecting to find consternation among the staff at this policy and lack of site-based input, we were surprised to find less anguish about a system that failed to consult teachers than there was about the nature of the unpopular book supplied. This is not precisely the sense of control issue addressed by proponents of SBM.

At a well-attended town meeting on education in the winter of 1991/92, area schools were each asked to make a short presentation describing progress on school improvement plans and current special events. Each presentation was given by the school's P.T.S.O. members though some schools had their administrators take part as well. In none of the presentations was there an explication of theoretical or 'pure' educational changes occurring in the schools while three of the schools enthused about the return on capital outlay that popcorn machines can generate. Even with the two schools in which the university coalition teams had been active in the preceding eighteen months, scant mention was made of the proposed or implemented innovations. Commanding far greater pride for school representatives, however, was the usual litany of revenue raising ideas and sporting accomplishments.

The irony here was that in the superintendent's passionate keynote address he had talked about the needed "revolution" in education. If what schools typically present to the community is so lacking in discourse on topics of educational significance, there is little wonder that structural change seems so distant. Site-based management teams are usually sensitive to the need to communicate their plans to all concerned; perhaps it is time for more attention to be paid to the educational framework guiding the responsibilities of site-based management.

In place of the standard control or commitment related arguments for SBM, the model for effective change articulated by coalition teachers could be summarized thus: teachers who feel comfortable about their role and the conditions under which they work will be more efficacious. Such an argument is not without foundation. Recent innovations in industrial practices reflect the idea that greater productivity will be garnered from workers who share congenial relations with all levels of management and who are satisfied with their role in the manufacturing process. But satisfaction with one's role can spring from a number of sources. In our target schools the sense of satisfaction does not appear to be volition-based. From the coalition's point of view, middle school teachers' strict role definitions have been obstacles to change. Resistance has been apparent when, for instance, a teacher's subject specialty has been "threatened" by the development of an interdisciplinary unit. In another case, staff at West declined to adopt an advisory program partly because, as one of our team members informed us, "I want to be a teacher, not a counselor".

This role insularity has been a recurrent theme at West Middle School in particular, where any proposed reforms have come under the closest scrutiny for their possible impact on teachers' autonomy and daily routines. The vice-principal, a pivotal figure in school policy decisions, has gone to great lengths to placate school staff and try to organize amicable conditions for staff interaction. In informal conversations he has conveyed to us the idea that no progress can be made without the fullest consent and desire for change on

behalf of all staff and departments (with the exception of specialist or part-time teachers whose scheduling is often incompatible with changes in the school day). Several proposals have reached an advanced stage only to be met by the concerted efforts of interested parties for whom school improvement plans had generated little previous interest.

An example of the sort of impasse that has been encountered arose with discussions on modifications to the school day to facilitate a more interdisciplinary approach. One of the primary objections to deviation in the segmentation of time was the disruptive impact that changes would have on staff lunch time supervision duties. When one teacher suggested that problems might ensue, both the principal and vice-principal were adamant that staff could not be asked to reformulate their lunch time schedules if they were happy with current arrangements. At a late point in the discussion a coalition member asked what difference the changes in the school day might make for students. This prompted a whole new discussion as we began to realize that up until that point the daily routines of students had not really been considered; what had been implied was that to make popular changes in scheduling for teachers would inevitably result in positive outcomes for students.

While teacher contentment is not usually considered a prerequisite for school improvement, this has been a strong theme for teachers and school leaders who appear not to distinguish between the concepts of empowerment and role satisfaction. In studiously avoiding conflicts with established staff routines, administrators reinforce a teacher culture which seeks to minimize any hint of interference from colleagues. The net result is the premature demise of plans for substantive restructuring.

Teacher empowerment and student recognition

The teachers we have interviewed see one important aspect of their site-based empowerment as the opportunity to exercise different ideas on student recognition. Teachers at both levels commonly promote and espouse the benefits of one-shot events as motivating tools. At West Middle School, "spirit week" is regarded as an important fixture on the calendar and staff expend a lot of energy in its planning. Unfortunately the special events set aside for the week seem to bear little relation to the curriculum or to furnishing the message that school can be consistently engaging of the spirit. Meanwhile school leaders at East attach great significance to the annual "self-esteem day". Again, these are arrangements made with the best of intentions; above all it is the fleeting and remedial character of such events that the coalition's motivational framework is now beginning to seriously question.

At West we have also witnessed a number of calls for the students to hear 'motivational speakers'. Funds were allocated for one such speaker to address the entire sixth grade. The meeting, scheduled during regular classroom hours, consisted of a series of homilies and reciprocal chants urging belief in oneself and the idea that desiring something enough will make it so. Such models are required, it is argued, for children who will not easily become industrious, self-regulated individuals. Certain aspects of the theory have been emphasized in response: motivation for lifelong learning cannot be captured by platitudes; the focus on self detracts from a concern for learning and understanding; and, a danger lies in conveying the message that the school does not expect students to enjoy learning or be motivated through the nature of what it provides. These counter arguments will hopefully grow more forceful as the implications of the framework are absorbed.

Teachers' conceptions of the power of self-esteem to promote student learning frequently shape school policies on student grouping and recognition. The need for high self-esteem is viewed partly as a justification for tracking -- lower ability children will not feel good about themselves in the presence of higher ability children -- and also as a buffering agent between school and the ill effects of home life. This "feel-good" trait, as a prerequisite for academic development, is quite different from a view of high self-esteem as a consequence of completing academic tasks successfully and gaining a sense of competence.

Reports of school practices that reflect the conventional view of the need to provide periodic feel-good boosts are rife. For some teachers the enhancement of student self-esteem is first on their list of objectives. Illustrative of the form that these practices can take are stories of the ways in which the schools choose to recognize their students.

The PTSO at West inaugurated a good citizen award, ostensibly for any child in the school but slanted heavily toward the students who "never get any prizes". The major prize offered was a voucher for successful nominees to dine their parents at a local restaurant. During the same period this supportive restaurant had agreed to publish the school honor roll on its place mats. The irony of the situation hardly needs spelling out for anyone who has agonized over the social impact of the distribution of scarce rewards; here was a situation in which a family, in the very act of reflecting on an accomplishment, would witness a more coveted school award for which their child would never be a contender. It might seem churlish to criticize and theorize about such well intentioned ideas for recognition (and perhaps no-one suffered a loss of appetite). Yet this episode serves as a poignant example of the frequently undetected or under-examined social ramifications of school practices.

Prior to the intervention, both schools operated a year round academic honor roll. Leaving aside the larger question of the appropriateness of this form of recognition (for the purposes of developing a task focus it makes no sense to force such stark comparisons of ability), we considered its relation to children's self-esteem. Teachers felt that the honor roll had great incentive value and enhanced self-esteem. At East assemblies were held for honor roll inductees of the first grade and upward. Several times a year the school principal granted to those who made the honor roll the privilege of being escorted to lunch at a fast food restaurant. At the middle school, "honor society kids" are accorded a wide array of privileges that set them apart from the rest of the student body. These children perform duties such as the raising and lowering of the school flag; act as guides at "parents' evening"; attend special events such as a Shakespearean festival in Canada; and are the focus of some ambitious fund raising ideas of the PTSO.

Of the two schools, the greater impact of the theory thus far has been at East. Here the staff has begun to see the paradoxical relation between the school's commitment to task-focused learning and the consequences of the honor roll. What formerly had been an unquestioned part of the school fabric has now disappeared and new ways of recognizing more students are being considered.

At West changes to the recognition system have so far not materialized. While teachers agree that there are some pressing problems connected with self-esteem for a large number of pupils, at present alternative recognition ideas are getting short shrift. Some policies are explained by the incontestable claim that 'it works'. An example of a practice in the school that is antithetical to our framework is the awarding of 'skip it' coupons to pupils who successfully complete various tasks. The questionable message that such an exercise sends with regard to the value and meaning of homework or academic tasks has hitherto not been analyzed.

Members of the coalition have always been aware of the difficulty in challenging long-established school practices. Since, for example, the local weekly news magazine publishes the honor rolls of all local schools, we are dealing with a most sensitive community topic. Indeed given such publicity, we would agree that there is some incentive value attached to making the list. But to reiterate the framework, it is the reasons that students have for achievement striving that are significant. Practices like the honor roll point children in the direction of proving their ability. Maintaining a high grade point average too often means reducing risk taking behavior and in normatively evaluated settings, outperforming one's peers - behaviors that are likely to forestall the development of qualities of internalization and self-regulation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

An integrative approach

In view of the unease created by new governance structures (Malen & Ogawa, 1988) and the accompanying conflicting messages sent to students, researchers are beginning to argue for an integrative approach to structural change. Carole Ames (In Press) questions the value of classroom mastery-oriented task structures when the evaluation structure is performance-oriented; Maehr & Midgley (1991) likewise point to dilemmas at a school-wide level where, for example, school wide ability-focused recognition procedures can undermine classroom learning goals. The value of our theoretical underpinning is that it provides the means whereby school leaders can detect such debilitating conflicts and plan accordingly.

In our research efforts we have organized some teacher surveys on the basis of the importance of their perceptions of school culture for teachers. This information is indeed valuable, given a mediating role played by such perceptions in the link between their behavior and student outcomes. However, since then our consideration of the theory has moved us to a position where we feel that the more compelling and relevant question centers around what teachers perceive as important in the school culture for their pupils. In other words, rather than focusing on the question, 'What kind of school is this for teachers to feel efficacious'? our next wave of data will be concerned with asking 'What do teachers think about the school as a place for children to feel worthy and efficacious'?

Conclusion

The approach to restructuring described earlier is informed by goal theory and aims to change school policies and practices such that the primary focus for students becomes one of task mastery and learning rather than one of relative ability and comparative performance.

This attempt to reformulate the psychological climate of the school differs substantially from current popular reform efforts stemming from either effective schools or site-based management initiatives. The approach to restructuring that we are evolving moves schools some way beyond the rhetoric of these thrusts; it represents a strategy more directly oriented toward student outcomes and addresses a larger set of questions concerning educational processes.

Some problems with the implementation of effective schools reform were noted. For instance, in the absence of a guiding theory of children's learning, a discrepancy between a school's institutionalized expectations and its stated mission is difficult to detect. In the case of expectancy for academic success, teachers' awareness of damaging sustaining effects on an interpersonal level may be undermined by school-level policies that transmit a different form of expectancy information. Practices that stress normative evaluations, letter grades, ability grouping, and privileges granted to high achievers can hardly convey to the majority of students that they are equally valued or expected to succeed. None of these practices are directly called into question under the auspices of effective schools research.

One the other hand, the coalition fully endorses the tenets of site-based management. A school's governance structure should reflect the engagement and empowerment of its principal clients. In adopting a collaborative approach to the question of school reform, the project is aligned with the same principle of empowerment . During the course of the first two years of the coalition, however, considerable doubt has been cast regarding the utility of the empowerment notion in relation to altering the deepest structure of schooling. As a single strategy for improvement, the concept of teacher empowerment provides limited scope for substantive change. First, there is the danger that teachers will be expected to perform increased financial and executive duties without commensurate attention being paid to pedagogical matters. Second, from the perspective of goal theory it is counterproductive to "empower" teachers to follow policies that foster an ability focus or that are likely to undermine children's investment in learning. Commentators on the state

of the school system frequently call for teachers to be empowered to stave off the malaise. The question is, empowered to do what? Rather than asking how teachers should be empowered, the coalition has been concerned with the question, 'what should teachers be empowered to do'?

Implicit in our middle school teachers' model of an efficient school is the notion that student outcomes will be enhanced if staff enjoy harmonious relations and are content with their roles. In practice, however, this 'indirect benefits for all' model, besides tying up the vice-principal's time and resources, seems to be tenuously connected with what schools offer children. While the idea of collegial relations among school staff is clearly desirable, and perhaps necessary for meaningful reform, it is not sufficient. A concern for staff harmony as an end in itself has little justification beyond incidental benefits. The proclivity toward defining school improvement in terms of greater staff contentment may serve the needs of those seeking only to protect their separateness or the compartmentalization of the school, not those committed to changing the school's psychological climate.

We suspect that the performance-orientation of the school, (e.g., evidenced by descriptions of currently employed recognition structures) weighs much more heavily on the overall school experience for students than does the degree of staff satisfaction. That is not to disagree with Ryan and Stiller's (1991) judgment that, "the capacity of teachers to promote self-regulation and internalization of value for learning is inexorably intertwined with teachers' opportunities to regulate their own activities.." (p.130). What does seem important to consider, however, is the form that such activities take and not the merits of teachers' opportunities to self-regulate per se. Empowering teachers to implement patchwork and atheoretical practices is likely to leave fundamental problems untouched. To use an apt analogy for this school district, it is akin to giving auto workers powers over production decisions yet leaving them to assemble cars that are outmoded in design.

Our assessment of the coalition to date underscores the importance of an approach to restructuring that is comprehensive and theory-driven. Elementary and middle level schools are in many respects separate and barely connected entities; a point recognized most acutely by the project's principal investigators, participants on both coalition teams. The demonstration schools also vary on dimensions related strictly to the evolution of schools serving different age-levels of pupils. Nonetheless, our framework's set of assumptions with regard to the relationship between pupils' goal orientation, preferences for learning, and aspects of the classroom climate appear to hold for both levels of school (Aberbach & Wood, 1992; Anderman & Midgley,1992; Anderman, Urdan, & Midgley, 1992). The question that we are primarily interested in concerns the viability of this model from a school-wide perspective

Cuban's (1992) description of the origins and development of junior high schools provides valuable insights into why enduring reform of middle level schools is so elusive. We have to recognize that some of the more intractable school practices that we have begun to question cannot be separated from the influence and expectations of the school's constituents. Discussions and proposed reforms frequently center around topics that strongly conflict with traditional school practices and have led us to consider a broader view of the macro-culture of the school than we would otherwise have done.

The rhetoric of the effective schools movement has succeeded in popularizing the notion that school restructuring should be predicated on discovering and applying 'what works best'. Without a theoretical purpose to school improvement this notion deters discussion on primary causes and encourages conventional curricular, grouping, and evaluative practices together with an add-on approach. Also, in the absence of a core group of theoretically committed staff, a kind of laissez-faire individualism flourishes with teachers striving to find what works for them out of all context and connectedness with their colleagues. Rather than basing school improvement on what we know about effective schools (Lezotte, 1989), this analysis would suggest that what we know about children's goals for learning provides a more useful starting point for reform. Recent developments in the organization of schooling do not bode well for the likelihood of theoretical

considerations impacting school restructuring. Baltimore area schools, among other districts, are now hiring private bureaucrats to administer their school system. The vital importance of financial efficiency in school administration cannot be dismissed but then neither can the significance of a conceptual framework for reaching an understanding of 'what works best'.

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